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Thesis

HARTWIG WESSELY
(1725-1805)

A STUDY
IN
JEWISH EDUCATIONAL REFORM

Submitted by

William Benjamin Furie
(B.J. Ed., Hebrew Teachers College, 1934)
(B. S. in Ed., Boston University, 1936)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for
the degree of Master of Education

1936

READERS:-

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July 15, 1936

Thesis Committee
School of Education
Boston University
29 Exeter Street
Boston, Massachusetts

Gentlemen:

I hereby submit for approval my Master's thesis, entitled "Hartwig Wessely(1725-1805), A Study in Jewish Educational Reform".

The problem before me, as I approached the preparation of the dissertation, was to ascertain the educational reforms promulgated by Hartwig Wessely in his 357 page volume "Dibre Shalom ve-Emet"(Hebrew), which was the direct outcome of the "Patent of Toleration"(German) of Emperor Joseph II.

Thus, my initial step was the translation of both documents; and after interpreting them, setting them in their proper historical frame. My final task was an evaluation of Wessely's contribution to Jewish educational contents, procedure, and life in general.

Respectfully submitted,

William B. Furie

Office of the
Director of the
Bureau of the
Census
Washington, D.C.
July 1, 1940

Director
Bureau of the
Census
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 26th instant, regarding the matter of the Census of 1940.

The Census of 1940 is being conducted on a basis of voluntary cooperation on the part of the public. It is the policy of the Bureau to obtain the most accurate and complete information possible from the people of the United States.

It is requested that you advise the Bureau of any changes in your address or other information which may be of assistance in the conduct of the Census.

Sincerely,
Director

HARTWIG WESSELY

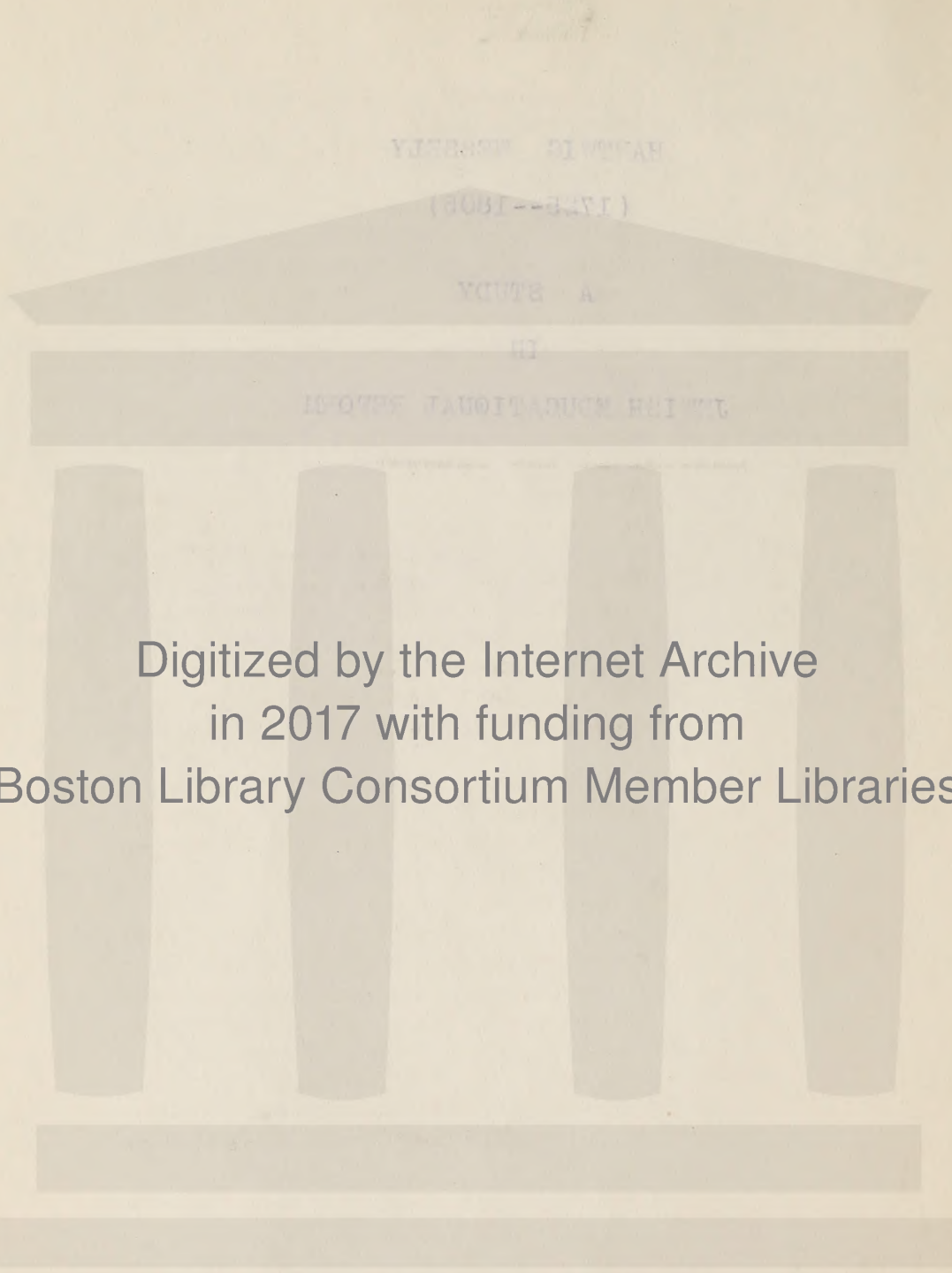
(1725--1805)

A STUDY

IN

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Chapter I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Jews Under Charles VI

The early years of the eighteenth century found Charles VI on the throne in Austria. The political status of the wealthy Jews was quite naturally better than that of their less fortunate brethren. But, even this upper class stood outside the law, and for its existence depended completely upon the favor of the Emperor. This favor could be retained only upon cash payment. From the mercenary attitude of the Emperor toward the Jews, as evidenced by his threats to expel them because of a ritual-murder accusation, Easter of 1715, merely as a pretense to extract money from them, we may comprehend the lowly status of the sons of Israel.

In the Jewish community "only the head of the family was permitted to carry on trade. Money transactions and wholesale trade were forbidden. Each family, thus, had to deal directly with the government; they were not able to act as a community. Those who were neither 'privileged' nor 'tolerated' were expelled. The personal regulations of the Emperor himself made the lot of the Jews, already completely without rights, even more difficult."

Historical Background

The Jews Under Charles VI

The early years of the fifteenth century found Charles VI in the prime of his life. The political situation of the country then was quite markedly different from that of the last fourteenth century. But, even this aspect alone stood outside the law, and for the emperor's household remained under the favor of the emperor. This favor could be retained only upon such payment. From the monetary situation at the emperor's court the Jews, as evidenced by his letters to and from him because of a financial-minded disposition, later of 1416, appear as a prominent factor in the money market. We may comprehend the Jewish attitude at the time of Israel. In the Jewish community "only the head of the law" was permitted to carry on trade. Money transactions and official bonds were forbidden. Such Jewish laws, not so much directly aimed at the government, but rather at the Jews as a community. Those who were religiously privileged, for example, were excluded. The national regulations of the emperor himself gave the Jews of the time, already completely without rights, even more difficulties.

The Jews Under Maria Theresa

If the Jews had hopes of relief from the successor of Charles, they were quickly crushed. We can clearly note the sentiment which permeated Maria Theresa's thinking from her statement that "she knew no worse plague for the State than the Jewish nation, because of its deceitfulness; its usury, its ability to drag people down to beggary, and its use of every type of evil method from which an honorable man would shrink."² Personal hatred for the Jews thus replaced the policy dictated purely by financial gain, and made their painful lot worse. The outspoken policy of the Empress toward the Jews was to rid the land of them by legislation. In 1777, she wrote that the Jews were "insofar as possible to be kept away from here and to be diminished in numbers; and their privileges were not to be renewed except for weighty reasons."³ What were these "weighty reasons" for which the Austrian Jew might be tolerated? He had to prove that he possessed property, that he would be useful to the State, especially in industry, and that he would pay an annual toleration tax. The Empress continued in her efforts to separate the residences of Jews and Christians, bringing the social status of the former down to the depths of degradation.

How did the Jews earn their livelihood? According to a decree of 1753 of Maria Theresa, only the head of the

#2 Ibid. Page 139

#3 Ibid. Page 140

If the Jews had hoped to resist from the moment
of German rule, they were quickly crushed. As an already
the Semitic which persecuted Jews there is a history from
her statement that "she knew no more than the Jews
than the Jewish nation, because of its docility; the
Jews, the ability to keep people back to back, and the
use of every type of evil weapon from which an honorable man
refrains." Personal hatred for the Jews was not
the policy of the Jewish people, but rather their
refusal to accept. The religious policy of the German
and the Jews was to rid the land of Jews by legislation.
In 1935, she wrote that the Jews were "a people as possible
to be kept away from here and to be eliminated in numbers;
and their privileges were not to be removed except for
religion reasons." That was the "weighty reasons" for
which the Jewish law rights were removed. He had to have
that he possessed property, that he would be useful to the
state, especially in industry, and that he would pay an
annual contribution tax. The Jewish community in her efforts
to separate the religious of Jews and Christians, bringing
the racial status of the Jewish down to the height of dogma
and religion.

How did the Jews come into Jewish life? According
to a census of 1935 of Jewish people, only the Jews of the

family could be engaged in gainful employment. His choice of business^e was limited to money-changing, general financial operations, and trade in jewels. Such occupations netted very little, as is evident from the limitation of the rate of interest to 4%, and the prohibition against making loans upon houses, landed estates, and vineyards. It was just as unlikely that the Jews would succeed in the jewel trade, for they were forbidden to set jewels or to sell them on credit. It was only natural, therefore for the Jews to deteriorate economically to such an extent that in 1762 the Court Treasury declared that outside of three families there were only impoverished Jews.

The religiously fanatic Maria Theresa, as a shattering climax, also tried to hamper the Jews in the conduct of their religious services. In Vienna, for instance, she prohibited the building of a synagogue or the setting aside of any place for conducting a public service.

Joseph II

It remained for Emperor Joseph II, son of Maria Theresa, to be the first to pay serious attention to toleration and to grant partial religious freedom to the Jews. As soon as he ascended the throne, he began to set aside the system of anti-Jewish legislation. He recognized that it was the fault of the government rather than of the Jews that they were of very little value to the State. He saw that the

family could be engaged in certain occupations. His choice
of business was limited to money-lending, general mercantile
operations, and trade in jewels. Such businesses needed
very little, as is evident from the list of the names
of interest to 42, and the prohibition against selling jewels
upon houses, landed estates, and vineyards. It was just as
evidently that the law would succeed in the jewel trade, for
they were forbidden to sell jewels or to sell them on credit.
It was only natural, therefore, for the law to be directed
consequently to such an extent that in 1702 the Council
thereby declared that articles of dress forbidden to Jews were
only lapel-ornaments.

The religious laws of the Council, as a
characteristic of the law in the con-
stant of their religious services. In Vienna, the Emperor
also prohibited the holding of a synagogue on the Sabbath
and on any other day constituting a public service.

Chapter II

It remained for Emperor Joseph II, son of Maria
Theresa, to be the first to pay serious attention to Jew-
ry and to grant partial religious freedom to the Jews.
As soon as he ascended the throne, he began to act with the
view of anti-Jewish legislation. He recognized that it was
one of the basic of the government's duty to the Jews that they
were of very little value to the State. He saw that the

government, by limiting their economic possibilities, itself had reduced their social worth to a minimum. In a letter to the Chief Chancellor of the Court on May 13, 1781 he stated that his plan was "to make the limbs of the Jewish nation more useful to and usable by the State."⁴ This, indeed, was the germ of the Patent of Toleration that was yet to come. On October 1, 1781 Joseph ordered his government to draw up a charter that would mark a break with the system of intolerance toward non-Christians. He regarded the Jew as a human being having the same spiritual and moral predispositions as Christians.

The enlightenment of the Jews was one of Joseph's cherished plans. To this end (on October 19, 1781) he demanded that the Jews should assimilate themselves to their surroundings, that they should be allowed to lease lands for agricultural purposes (if they worked it with Jewish hands), to engage in all mechanical trades, arts, and wholesale commerce. One of his first acts of government was the abrogation of all the laws requiring the Jews to wear a distinctive dress (October 21, 1781). On December 19, 1781 he abolished the poll-tax, directed the authorities to treat the Jews like fellow-men (Neben menschen), and commanded that Jewish children in the public schools should also receive proper consideration. On January 2, 1782 he culminated these many sporadic efforts to legislate favorably for the Jews in one massed legislative act which was officially entitled "Patent Concerning

government, by listing their economic necessities, itself
had reduced their social order to a minimum. In a letter to
the United States Ambassador at the time on May 12, 1941 he stated
that his aim was "to make the idea of the Jewish nation
more useful to the world by the state." This, indeed, was
the aim of the Jewish state of Palestine that was set up.
On October 1, 1941 Joseph ordered his government to start up
a committee that would work a treaty with the state of Israel
to secure Jewish non-Hostilities. He requested the law as a human
being having the same political and moral responsibilities
as Christians.
The establishment of the law was one of Joseph's
primary aims. In this and (on October 12, 1941) he
demanded that the Jews should maintain themselves as their
own people, that they should be allowed to leave their
political position (if they wished it with their hands),
to engage in all economic, social, and political con-
merce. One of his first acts of government was the abolition
of all the laws regarding the Jews to make a legislative basis
(October 12, 1941). On December 12, 1941 he abolished the
anti-Jewish laws, and ordered the authorities to treat the Jews like
other citizens (Jewish citizens), and requested that Jewish citi-
zens in the public schools should also receive proper educa-
tion. On January 5, 1942 he ordered that there be no Jewish
offices to legislate favorably for the Jews in the Jewish legis-
lative and which was officially entitled "Jewish Counciling"

the Toleration of the Jews in Vienna and Northern Austria," which we shall study at greater length in the next chapter.

To be sure, Joseph's reforms did not aim at the complete emancipation of the Jew. Yet, for the time being, it was enough that it represented a break with the type of legislation which was based on anti-Jewish "principles" of politics----consciously aiming at the elimination of the Jews from society. Thus, the Emperor's policy was based upon more than charity; it was grounded in common sense and ordinary humanity. It drew the Jews into cooperation with the aims of the State, and placed them upon an equal footing with the rest of the citizens.

Moses Mendelssohn and Jewish Emancipation

This Jewish people who, as we have said, had been the object of scorn not only of the malicious and ignorant, but also of the tolerant and the thinkers, this people awakened from its lethargy under the influence of Moses Mendelssohn and his pupils, who achieved this great awakening without premeditating it. Mendelssohn involuntarily awakened the latent endowments of the Jewish people which needed only an impetus to break its restraint and to unfold itself.

Mendelssohn, who in his feelings was both Jew and German, wished to teach his co-religionists the German language and thus prepare them for German culture. Therefore, he, with collaborators, prepared a German translation of the Pentateuch, with a Hebrew commentary thereon. This commentary of the Pentateuch completed in 1783,

had an important effect in bringing the Jews to share in the progress of the age. It aroused their interest in the study of Hebrew grammar, made them eager for German nationality, and culture, and opened the path to a new era in the education of the young and the edification of the Jewish school system, work which was to be carried on to greater heights by Hartwig Wessely. Mendelssohn did much to strengthen the hold of enlightenment by his publication of "Jerusalem" in 1783, in which he pleaded for a separation of church and state, for a realization that religion was not to accentuate creeds but solely to promote human happiness, and for a freedom of belief and conscience. Mendelssohn was also the first to advocate the emancipation of the Jews. For, when his co-religionists in Alsace requested him to prepare a petition for them to lay before the French Council of State, he persuaded his friend the councillor of War, Dohm, to undertake the task. This resulted in the memorial "Über die Bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden", which was the first monogram to discuss the problem of emancipation scientifically.

Hartwig Wessely

At the same time and in the same way, Mendelssohn gave another stimulus to the inner rejuvenation of the Jews, which was to keep pace with the political emancipation. Just as he had prevailed upon Dohm to champion the one cause, he stimulated another friend, Hartwig Wessely, who was peculiarly fitted for that mission, to undertake the other. The Scriptures in the original formed the center of Wessely's inner life.

had an important effect in bringing the Jews to stand in the
progress of the war. It showed that interest in the work
of Jewish people, and that they were not to be regarded as
passive, and opened the way to a new era in the relations
of the young and the old. The relations of the Jewish people
with the world was to be carried on by Jewish people by Jewish
people. Jewish people with their own strength and power of ex-
istence of the Jewish people in 1933, in 1933, in 1933, in 1933,
as showed for a separation of Jewish and non-Jewish, for a reali-
zation that Jewish people was not to be separated from the Jewish
to Jewish people, and for a Jewish of Jewish and
non-Jewish. Jewish people was at the time to achieve the
realization of the Jewish, for, when the Jewish people in
Albania requested him to become a member of the Jewish
before the Jewish people of the Jewish, he promised his Jewish
the realization of the Jewish, and, he understood the Jewish. This re-
sulted in the Jewish "The Jewish people of the Jewish" for
Jewish, which was the first step to achieve the Jewish
of Jewish people of the Jewish.

Hartley H. H.

At the same time and in the same way, Jewish people
have another situation in the Jewish people of the Jewish,
which was to keep Jews with the Jewish people, Jewish
as he had revealed upon Jews in Jewish the one Jewish, he
achieved Jewish people, Jewish people, and was Jewish
Jewish for Jewish people, he understood the Jewish. The Jewish
in the Jewish people the Jewish of Jewish people.

Like Mendelssohn he, too, developed early a sense of beauty, an appreciation of purity of language and form, and a repugnance to corruption of speech. Wessely was drawn into public activity by Mendelssohn. The community of Trieste, who, unlike the German Jews did not regard secular education as heresy, inquired of Count Zinzendorf, the governor of the province, where they could obtain textbooks for religious and moral instruction in the Normal Schools to be established in accordance with the Edict of Toleration. Zinzendorf referred them to Mendelssohn who called attention to his friend Hartwig Wessely, and his open letter ("Words of Peace and Truth") in recommendation of the establishment of Jewish schools; and thereafter the community of Trieste entered into correspondence with Wessely.

Early Life

Hartwig Wessely was born in the city of Hamburg in 1725. When he was but a child his family moved to Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark. Hartwig received the regular education of his times. When he was but nine years old, before he had really mastered the Hebrew language and the Holy Scriptures, he was cast into the sea of the Talmud to swim in its profound depths. He foundered, thus, not particularly enthused, until the grammarian, Rabbi Solomon Zalman, attracted the child's interest to the Hebrew language. Hartwig mastered Hebrew from the roots up and then spent all his spare moments delving into Hebrew literature. In addition to the Hebrew language and its vast literature, the boy also studied German,

French, Danish, Dutch, and the books of knowledge written in these tongues. To complete a balanced education, young Wessely also browsed about in a study of the principles of commerce and trade, for he did not wish to make his scholarship the means of livelihood. Despite his father's comparatively comfortable position in life, the boy was left uninfluenced by his financially secure status, and spent all his time in serious study.

First Works

For business reasons, Hartwig later transferred his residence from Copenhagen to Amsterdam, where at a favorable salary he acted as secretary in a large commercial house. In 1765 while still employed in Amsterdam, he published his first book entitled "Gan Na'ul" ("Locked Garden") which was a philological treatise on Hebrew grammar, incorporating Biblical and Talmudic commentary. While he published this book at his own expense, he distributed it without cost, in order that he might spread the study of grammar among the Jewish scholars. This work was received with acclaim on all sides and encouraged Wessely to continue in his efforts. Two years later he had completed the second part of this book, wherein he shows his skill with psychology as well as in strictly Jewish themes. He was unable to distribute this book without charge, since he had expended too much on his publication efforts; but, so great was the demand, that every copy was sold within a few weeks. He lived as a respected and honored citizen of Amsterdam for many days, until his father ordered him to proceed to,

Hamburg. Upon his arrival there the scholars received him warmly into their inner circles. Here, Hartwig met a charming girl whom he married, with whom he lived happily many years, and with whom he begat sons and daughters. For five years he dwelt serenely in Hamburg, and at his leisure wrote many books which he later published.

Later Writings

Soon, however, fortune turned her back upon him, and his economic position became insecure. At such a time he welcomed the invitation of a certain Joseph bar Feitel to come to Berlin and take charge of his extensive business activities. Especially was Wessely overjoyed at the opportunity to reside in the city which was the center of enlightenment, over which Moses Mendelssohn held sway. In 1775 Hartwig Wessely came to live in Berlin where he formed an intimate and lasting friendship with Mendelssohn. In the same year Wessely published his commentary on the treatise, "Sayings of the Fathers" (of the Talmud), which he entitled "Yen Lebanon" (Wine of Lebanon), and which ~~found~~ found favor in the eyes of all the learned Jews throughout the land. Two years later in 1777 he published a translation of "The Wisdom of Solomon", one of the books of the apocrypha, either from the French or the German. Were it not for the fact that we know the translator definitely, the book appears to have been written two thousand years ago, when Hebrew was a live language.

However, upon his arrival there the committee received the
 early into their inner circle. Early, however, was a member
 the first when he arrived, with whom he lived happily ever
 years, and with whom he began some new business. For five
 years he dwelt peacefully in England, and at his return some
 many books which he later published.

Later writings

Now, however, I should mention that when the
 and his scientific position became important. It was a time
 he witnessed the invention of a certain device that led to
 come to Berlin and take charge of his scientific business con-
 sulting. Scientifically and technically developed at the university
 to reside in the city which was the center of enlightenment,
 ever which some knowledge was said to be. In 1775 Berlin
 possibly came to live in Berlin where he found an interest
 and looking for knowledge with enthusiasm. In the same year
 was published his commentary on the works of "Hegel"
 of the "Hegel" (of the "Hegel"), which he entitled "The
 Hegel" (also of Hegel), and which Hegel found favor in
 the year of 1777 he turned down throughout the year. The
 years later in 1777 he published a translation of "The Sci-
 des of Hegel", one of the books of the sciences, which
 from the French of the sciences. It was not for the first time
 we know the translation definitely, the book speaks to us
 and which we know from the year 1777, when Hegel was a little
 language.

Wessely spent the days at work and the nights peacefully at study. This did not last for long, however, for the wealthy employer of Wessely decided to retire from business and spend the rest of his days in peace and rest. Then came days of suffering for Wessely and his family, which they bore with such dignity and restraint that no one knew of their low state. Soon his position was bettered when some of the people of the community hired him to expound the Scriptures and the Talmud before them several times during the week, for which they paid him well. Indeed, these proved to be the happiest days of Wessely's life, for he lived in a spiritual heaven, with no earthly cares, and able to dedicate himself to study, a practice which had persisted with him from his childhood days. In 1781 Moses Mendelssohn had invited him to prepare the Hebrew commentary on the Book of Leviticus. He undertook the task and by 1782 had prepared a very satisfactory interpretive work, which enhanced his position among the Jewish scholars of Germany.

Reaction To The Toleranzpatent ---- "Dibre Shalom ve-Emet"

Then in 1782, Emperor Joseph II issued the Toleranzpatent, in which he attempted to enable the Jews to enter into relationship with their fellow-citizens. Wessely celebrated the freedom granted by the Emperor in an enthusiastic hymn. His object was to allay the suspicion prevailing against the suggestions of the Emperor. Consequently, he published his Hebrew article "Dibre Shalom ve-Emet" ("Words of Peace and Truth"), his purpose being to justify Joseph II, in decreeing

that secular studies be given in the Normal School, along with moral instruction. He maintained that the Jew ought to acquire a general education, at least to overcome the prejudice resulting from cultural isolation, and also have a means whereby to earn his livelihood. He said that science destroyed superstition, and clarified such Biblical precepts as the dietary laws.

At once Wessely was accused of placing secular studies above the Torah and of being, therefore, an atheist and a supporter of the ungodly. He wrote several letters in reply, to defend himself against the charge of heresy. Spiritually, his cause was pleaded in vain; but the attack upon him was frustrated only through the intercession of Daniel Itzig, the president of the Berlin Jewish Community.

Last Years

Wessely still lived to witness to his sorrow the crumbling of the foundation of Judaism in Germany, resulting from a misuse of principles he had advocated. At the age of seventy-eight, he left Berlin and went to Hamburg to celebrate his daughter's marriage to a famous man of medicine. After much insisting on the part of his daughter, he assented to remain in Hamburg. Berlin's loss, thus, was Hamburg's gain; and he was received royally in his newly adopted city. Yet, his stay in Hamburg was very brief. For, after seven or eight months, he fell ill with the illness from which he finally succumbed in 1805, to be mourned by all the Jews, and to receive post-mortem tributes not only from his adherents, but also from his most bitter opponents.

#5 Biographical material is based essentially on Kalman Schulman's "Biography" (in Hebrew) which is prefaced to the "Words of Peace and Truth".

Chapter II

The Patent of Joseph II

Introduction

Pertinent at this point is a consideration of the Toleranzpatent (Edict of Toleration) which Joseph II issued on January 2, 1782, in which he most clearly expresses his views. Since throughout all my research and investigation, I have found no detailed treatment of this historic document, I now present an analytical study of the original German text which is on file in the Library of Congress.

An intelligent comprehension of the significance of this document is next to impossible, unless we transplant ourselves in spirit into the conditions extant at the issuance of the Edict. For, to the twentieth century mind little liberalism is manifest in the words of the Emperor, nor does this liberalism show its head until it is contrasted with conditions holding sway up to that time. We must remember, as stated in the first chapter, that the treatment of the Jews was still guided by the principle that they were a hindrance which required constant watching, lest it become pernicious. Joseph II adopted an attitude differing from this, and considered it his duty to improve the condition of the Jews.

The Emperor introduces the Patent with the statement that it was his aim to permit all his subjects, without distinction as to creed and nationality, to participate in the welfare and freedom of his government, or as he says:

Chapter II

The Record of Joseph II

Introduction

Examination of this record is a reproduction of the
reproduction (which of course) which Joseph II issued
on January 2, 1785, in which he first clearly expressed his
views. Since throughout all my research and investigation,
I have found no detailed treatment of this historic document,
I now present an amplified story of the original version text
which is as far as the history of Joseph II.

An important reproduction of the original
of this document is given in (which) which we translated
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"With respect to the external toleration of the Jews, no extension is granted; let it remain that they constitute no particular community under a separate leader of their nation, but, as heretofore, each family shall enjoy for itself protection of the law of the land."⁶

Residence Restrictions

While this beneficent ruler probably would have desired to step farther than he did, statesman that he was, he realized that it would have been but foolhardiness to ride higher than the current wave of humane sentiment, which was making its way through the land. For while liberal tendencies were beginning to obtain in some quarters, Joseph could not blind himself to both the everpresent, malignant fanaticism of the clergy who deprecated against Israel, and the deep-rooted economic and social vested interests, who, as they then felt, would undoubtedly have rebelled rather than see the Jews completely emancipated and put on a par with all other people. Hence, the Emperor, in this edict, felt it necessary to retain certain residence restrictions, though he modified others. But to his credit it must be stated that even though he could not go the full gamut of liberal equalization, even this portion of the Edict breathed the spirit of a new era. In the words of the Emperor the following regulations of the Jews were henceforth to prevail:

#6 "Patent Concerning the Toleration of the Jews in Vienna and Northern Austria," Joseph II---Article I.

With respect to the external relations of the Jews, no extension is granted; let it remain that they constitute no particular community under a separate leader of their nation, but, as heretofore, each family shall enjoy for itself protection of the law of the land."

Residence Restrictions

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56 "Patent Concerning the Relations of the Jews in Vienna and Northern Austria," Joseph II---Article I.

"In those places where Jews never before settled, they shall also in the future not be permitted to settle, although the king himself may find it advantageous to make an exception in the case of one or another, according to circumstances or for sufficient reason."⁷

So much was to placate the old guard, relative to the introduction of Jewish settlement where there had not been any before. Practically the same statute was put in force for the immigration to Vienna.

"No Jew is free to come to Vienna from other Austrian provinces in order to remain there permanently, without having received permission thereto from the North Austrian government. The Jews from foreign lands must apply for such permission from his Majesty himself."⁸

As these statements show, provision was made for the admission of certain Jews who would be acceptable to the authorities on the basis of financial independence primarily, and secondarily in the posting of a bond, as it were, proportionate to one's financial security and likelihood of burden upon the Austrian community.

"For the realization of this permission (to enter Vienna) each and every one must honestly show the craft which he pursues or the means of livelihood which he will enter upon here, together with the financial means required for the support of his business and for the continuance of the herementioned toleration, at the same time to point out to the North Austrian government whatever he believes he can

#7 Ibid. Article II

#8 Ibid. Article III

pay for the toleration, in such a way that it will be possible to increase or diminish (that sum) according as the circumstances of the one tolerated either improve or get worse according to the government's aforementioned judgement."⁹

The Austrian government goes on further to distinguish between those persons who are eligible or ineligible to benefit under this ruling. Inherent in this legislative pronouncement is a tragedy of Israel in the eighteenth century. The provisions of the law say:

"Against payment of this protection money the payer is authorized to remain in Vienna with his wife and with those children who have no trade of their own, who conduct no separate business, but are still under the care of the father, to enjoy the protection of the reigning prince, and to carry on the commerce open to his nation, or to follow the free branches of industry."¹⁰

This sounds highly acceptable as far as it goes, but a dynamite-laden clause now follows:

"This particular protection, however, does not at the same time extend to the son of a tolerated householder who marries and begins to establish his own household; nor to the daughter who is married to a Jew who is not yet tolerated here, or to a foreign Jew."¹¹

#9 Ibid. Article IV

#10 Ibid. Article V

#11 Ibid. Article VI

This clause acted as a birth-controlling element in the policy of the Austrian government. For, despite the Edict's allowing possibility of "toleration" to the newly-wed, such action was most difficult when we recall that the authorities were averse to the Jews' multiplying. This decree particularly relegates a majority of the Jewish youth to lives of celibacy, barren and unnatural, or if they chose, illegal arrangements whereby they might satisfy their natural desires. Nor did the tragedy end here. If these newly-weds wished to migrate elsewhere, they could not do so freely. Instead, if they wished to go to other parts for freer conditions, they must first be in possession of "departure" money.

"The father must always make preliminary announcement of such marriages, and the son, if he wishes to remain here, must acquire separate toleration, or if he receives permission to leave, must have the departure money to pay."¹²

And then to protect the treasury of the land, to equalize the domestic monetary balance:

"In the case of the marriage of the daughter to a foreigner being granted (and she is to leave the land), the departure money must be paid equivalent to the dowry money which is leaving the country."¹³

True these are difficult conditions under which to live, but considered in the light of their time, they represent advances over the past. Most of these easements occurred, however, in North Austria where the spirit of enlightenment had taken a firmer hold than in the southern districts.

#12 Ibid. Article VI

#13 Ibid. Article VI

This clause added as a side-condition element
in the policy of the American Government. For, besides the
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fact, even action was not difficult when we recall that the
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Instead, if they wished to go to other parts for their con-
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The father must always make preliminary arrange-
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here, must earn his own maintenance, or if he receives
permission to leave, must have the necessary money to pay. Is
it then to be the treasury of the Jew, to
opposite the Jewish monetary balance:
"In the case of the majority of the Jewish people
foreigners being treated as he is to leave the land, the
deportation money must be paid equivalent to the Jewish money
which is leaving the country."
These things are difficult conditions under which
to live, but considering in the light of their time, they rep-
resent advances over the past. Most of these measures occurred,
however, in North America where the spirit of capitalism
had taken a firmer hold than in the southern districts.

And wisely, the Emperor sought not to swim upstream against the current, and judiciously differentiated the North from the South. He says:

"In the open country in Lower Austria it still remains, as heretofore, forbidden for Jews to live."¹⁴

Economic Legislation ---- Confirmation of Earlier Privileges

But the spirit of liberalism again rears its head, and Joseph continues:

"If they wish to erect a factory in some village, or in a market-place, or in any case in some hitherto unoccupied ground, or to introduce some useful trade, they must in such cases seek permission from the government. However, after they have received such permission, they are entitled to the same rights and freedom on the land as their co-religionists in residence."¹⁵

As a final note of reassurance to the non-Jewish population, the Emperor deals with the problem of the foreign Jews who came to the country on business, but who, it was feared, would by subterfuge establish permanent residence and outgrow the foreordained physical limitations, as set by the Austrian government. Thus, comes the diplomatic imperial utterance;

"Since his Majesty, however, has already declared that his Highness does not wish the number of Jewish families settled here to be increased, therefore, the incoming foreign Jews must immediately upon their arrival ~~report~~ report to the North Austrian government, must show their business and the

#14 Ibid. Article VI

#15 Ibid. Article VII

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time necessary for its completion, also await confirmation or some decision from the bureau. As soon as their time has elapsed, they must either depart or apply to the government for an extension. Those who remain without acquiring permission, or beyond the time allotted them, or hide, will be sought, imprisoned and deported."¹⁶

Just as a good parent strives to build and maintain harmony on firm foundations, so Joseph strove to take advantage of the favorable attitude of the enlightened Austrian citizenry in a series of clauses dealing with the economic structure of the land. Whereas the Jews could not formerly serve as apprentices to Christians, by governmental decree the Emperor now permitted this, not on a compulsory, "Must" basis with negatory effects, but on a sane, voluntary basis, to rally around those whom the rays of enlightenment had already warmed. Thus he tactfully enunciates:

"For the alleviation of their future intercourse and for the preparation of the necessary means of livelihood, it is graciously permitted them (the Jews) from now on, here and elsewhere, to learn from Christian craftsmen all kinds of crafts and trades, and with this aim to let themselves out as apprentices to Christian masters or to work as journeymen, and these (Christian craftsmen) may accept them without remuneration. All this is not to be taken to mean that his Majesty wishes to impose any compulsion upon the Jews and Christians in this matter, but that his Majesty wishes only to grant those parties the freedom to arrive at a mutual understanding and accord in this matter."¹⁷

#16 Ibid. Article XX

#17 Ibid. Article X

Then, while really not granting much more freedom, Joseph reiterates statements of fact, but while so doing he gives expression to the new sentiments about to dominate the land. Coming from the imperial mouth, they must have influenced the thought of multitudes in its day.

"His Majesty hereby grants the Jewish nation the general permission to pursue only insofar as is here customary, with a free hand all kinds of trades without, however, the attendant civil and guild rights, from which they shall remain excluded, and this also not before they shall have received, like the Christians, the consent of the local magistrate in the city and that of the North Austrian government in the rural districts."¹⁸

"Similarly, his Majesty grants the Jews completely free choice even from among all rural branches of commerce, and permits them to acquire the right of wholesale trade under the same conditions and with the same rights as they are received and practiced by other Christian subjects."¹⁹

Since the establishment of manufactures and factories has long been permitted them, his Majesty here merely takes the opportunity to renew this permission and publicly to encourage them (the Jews) to such mutually publicly beneficial undertakings."²⁰

Capital and Investment

Emperor Joseph then seemingly takes note of that which had hitherto secretly prevailed, the lending of capital; though the Jews are restrained from actually assessing the goods (which is of minor significance, however).

#18 Ibid. Article X

#19 Ibid. Article XII

#20 Ibid. Article XIII

"His Majesty," he states, "further permits them to invest their capital and to insure it and lend it on stationary goods, or so-called real estate, but that they be not authorized, however, to assess the same themselves."²¹

Rights of Foreign Jews

But, all the while the government realized that the hostile elements would be on the alert for loopholes in the law as a basis for negating the whole. It was understood that economically the foreign Jews must be treated in the Patent. So, the Emperor continues legislating:

"With respect to such arrivals (of foreigners) it necessarily follows that they cannot be considered on an equal plane with those here tolerated in the matter of trade and journey, and pursuit of livelihood; consequently, they also do not possess the authority to deal in such wares with which only those specifically authorized tradesmen and the Jews here tolerated are allowed to deal."²²

"On the other hand such foreign Jews are permitted during the fairs to trade in all goods which are generally permitted to be introduced; but outside of the time of the fairs they are permitted to trade with those goods which pertain to every foreign tradesman."²³

At the same time in order to preclude legal conventions, the Emperor in this Toleranzpatent considers the questions of the Jews' harboring as servants people who would not otherwise be tolerated and could not, therefore remain in the land. Nor does he gruffly and tactlessly approach the

#21 Ibid. Article XIV

#22 Ibid. Article XVI

#23 Ibid. Article XXII

problem, but on the contrary, again uses it as a means of welding more closely the growing friendly relationships between Jew and Gentile, by allowing the Jew to hire Christian as well as Jewish servants.

"In order to offer the tolerated Jews some alleviation also in the matter of servants, they are, therefore, permitted to retain as many Jewish or even Christian servants as their affairs require; but they are bound not as formerly quarterly, but annually to submit a detailed report to the government in which are recorded together with all the children who are under the care and authority of the father, all servants with their name, age and religion; every householder must not only harbor in his home the Jewish servants, but must also be responsible for them, that they carry on no separate business, which is forbidden non-tolerated Jews. Consequently, his Majesty expects that they will not receive strange Jews in their homes, on the pretext that they are servants, to overstep the command through such evasion."²⁴

Laws Of Taxation

Shame and dishonor to a race are generally conceded to be difficult to bear, but of far greater difficulty is it when in addition to this moral degradation one is financially overburdened by excessive taxation. And the Jew had been weighted down to the limit by taxation, both as a badge of shame and a source of revenue. To the kinds of taxes there was almost no end. But an end to the increase thereof and a beginning of a gradual decrease was wrought by the beneficent Emperor. As much as he could and as quickly as the pulse of the times allowed, he removed taxes from the statute books.

In this Patent he continues such efforts.

"Not less does his Majesty completely abrogate the head-tax hitherto levied upon foreign Jews,"²⁵ (for he had already rescinded the ignominious poll-tax for tolerated Jews on December 19, 1781).

But in order to compensate for the loss of revenue, to some extent, and to hush the extreme critics of the government, Joseph added the following clause:

"His Majesty considers himself justified because of the loss to those who were affected by the head-tax to levy from the Jews a less onerous substitute,"²⁶ (which is a justifiable compromise and alleviation).

"Moreover, the double Court and Chancery taxes (Gerichtstaxen und Kanzlentarben) which are still in force for the Jews are throughout abrogated."²⁷

Social Legislation

Just as the ruler had interested himself in residence problems and primary economic issues, so, too, he turned his face toward the social aspects of the Jewish population. For here he unmistakably foresaw that an alleviation in the outward social abuses of the Jew must gradually be effected. Again he at first deals with those problems which by their removal will cause least resistance from the non-Jewish citizenry of Germany. Thus, the specific ecclesiastic restrictions, dating from the time of the Vienna Council, prohibiting Jews from being abroad before noon on Sundays and Catholic holy days, and from visiting places of amusement, are abolished.

#25 Ibid. Article XIV

#26 Ibid. Article XIX

#27 Ibid. Article XXIII

In this regard he mentioned such things.

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Subject's History

"Especially all hitherto customary signs and marks of distinction, such as the wearing of a beard, the prohibition to leave the house before noon on Sundays and (Catholic) holy days, and to frequent public places of amusement, and the like ---- are abrogated; on the contrary wholesale merchants and their sons as well as notables are even permitted to wear swords,"²⁸ (an equalizing mark of esteem in the eighteenth century).

These were the first external steps. Next he introduced something far more significant, perhaps, an innovation that would tend to breed closer inter-group relationships. No longer would there necessarily exist an official chasm between groups.

"By the present order, let his Majesty relax the hitherto prevalent restriction to designate Jewish houses and permit the tolerated Jews to rent a dwelling in the city as well as in the suburbs according to their desire."²⁹

Certainly this is the extension of a far-sighted social vision on the part of Israel's benefactor. Thus, he dealt with the tolerated Jews. But what of the foreign Jews who came to the land for business? Would they be pointed out to shame as heretofore? No! No longer would such conditions exist, by imperial decree.

"Not less does his Majesty permit the same (foreign Jews) free entrance in the restricted residential area for the pursuit of their business from time to time; and indeed

#28 Ibid. Article XXIV
 #29 Ibid. Article XVIII

without their being forced to seek room and board only with tolerated Jews or Jewish pensions, (but) they are authorized to get room and board for their money wherever they choose."³⁰

Educational Reform

The Emperor, as an advocate of "philosophic morality", interested himself in the education of the Jewish youth. As a champion of enlightenment, "aufklärung", for the Jew, Joseph wanted them to assimilate culturally with Germans. To attain this they must adopt the language of the country. The sole way of accomplishing this was by imperial coercion of the Jewish cohorts. This ideal he embodied in the Edict of Toleration, saying:

"In view of these many occupations opened to Jews and the manifold intercourse with Christians resulting therefrom, the concern for the preservation of mutual trust demands that the Hebrew, and the Hebrew-German, the so-called Jewish (Yiddish) language and script be done away with; his Majesty, therefore expressly forbids the use of the same in all public legal and extra-legal matters, and in its place in the future the language current in the land is to be used; and to forestall all consequences and complications, since such a speedy change is hardly possible, his Majesty, therefore sets a period of two years which is to be reckoned from the day of this Patent, in the course of which time all such necessary changes and limitations can and should be made; his Majesty here declares null and void all documents composed after this period in the Hebrew language or even merely written with Hebrew or Jewish characters."³¹

#30 Ibid. Article XIX

#31 Ibid. Article XV

Thus, no longer would it be possible for the Jewish population to conduct the official documentary business it had need to carry on, in their own language. Henceforth, within a period of two years, the language of the land must be used in order to attain official recognition. Still to a people unfamiliar with the German language, so complete a metamorphosis in so short a period of time presented a real problem. Lacking experience in school organization, as we shall note later, they naturally would not know in which direction to turn. Joseph II was fully cognizant of this situation, and in his desire to see the language of the land correctly adopted, he, in his imperial order, gave the Jews guidance as to the manner in which to organize their schools. What more could a minority group ask from a majority leader? surely this was the final test of the sincerity of the man. Certainly he was aware that if the Jews did not become integral elements in an advancing civilization, they would gradually degenerate into completely insignificant factors in his land. Yet, he wished to see the group vitalized and rejuvenated by the educative process which he must have regarded as the only sure-fire method, if there were such a one. So, magnanimously he offers to the Jews of Austria the following advice;

"It is permitted and enjoined the tolerated Jews in those places where they have no German schools of their own to send their children to the Christian Normalschulen

and Realschulen, in order to learn in these at least, reading, writing, and arithmetic. And since they have no synagogue of their own in Vienna (as in the Patent he states^{#32} no public worship, no synagogue is permitted them'), it is, therefore, permitted them to build for their own children, at their own cost, a separate, regularly equipped school, manned with teachers from among their co-religionists; and to that end, to seek out three capable young men whom they shall appoint to the direction of this Normalschule for the sake of regulated instruction in pedagogy. These future Normalschulen will stand under the same supervision as all other German schools. Whatever is most necessary pertaining to the impending establishment of these schools, especially with regard to moral textbooks, shall be permitted them; let it but please his Majesty to let them know that his Majesty is inclined to set them at ease as far as their religious practices are concerned, to leave to them the drawing up of the moral textbooks, with the provision, however, that they hand them over for examination and confirmation by the above-mentioned school supervisory body."³³

Finally, lending imperial authority to a condition of fact he closes his educational program, saying:

"With regard to the higher schools (universities), since the Jewish co-religionists have never been denied attendance at these it pleases his Majesty here merely to renew and confirm this permission."³⁴

#32 Ibid. Article I
 #33 Ibid. Article VIII
 #34 Ibid. Article IX

Concluding Admonition

In concluding the Edict of Toleration, Emperor Joseph II again mirrors the truly liberal spirit in which it was enunciated, and in sincerity, it appears, admonishes the Jews for their own welfare against abusing their newly-granted freedom, and thereby preclude further progress along liberal lines.

"Since his Majesty now through these marks of favor, practically puts the Jewish nation on an equal footing with other religious groups, with respect to their livelihood and the enjoyment of civil and domestic benefits, his Majesty, therefore, earnestly urges them at the same time to full observance of all political, civil and judicial laws of the land, such as they, like all other inhabitants are bound by, just as in their affairs in political and legal cases they remain subject to local authorities, according to the jurisdiction and activity pertaining to each authority: let his Majesty note their duty as well as their gratitude, that they do not misuse their grace and the liberties which thereby accrue to them, that they do not cause public offense through dissoluteness and lecentiousness, and that they in no way disturb the Christian religion, nor show towards it and its adherents any contempt; because an offense of this sort will most severely be punished and the one who commits this offense will incur, as the case may be, expulsion from here and all imperial lands."³⁵

#35 Ibid. Article XXVI

Chapter III

THE "DIBRE SHALOM ve-EMET"

The Traditional Educational Program

Having considered the social, economic, and political background leading up to the Edict of Toleration, which we explained in detail, we shall now consider the educational implications of this epoch-making document. A completely new form of educative process was suggested by the dictum of the Emperor Joseph II. So radical and sweeping were the changes to be effected that we must first scan briefly the old system in order to comprehend the significance of the metamorphosis.

From one of the contemporaries of Hartwig Wessely we receive a graphic description of the prevailing educational practices. Solomon Maimon in his "Autobiography" tells us, "I must now say something of the Condition of the Jewish schools in general. The school is commonly a small, smoky hut, and the children are scattered, some on benches, some on the bare earth. The master, in a dirty blouse, sitting on the table, holds between his knees a bowl in which he grinds his tobacco into snuff, while at the same time he wields his authority. The ushers give lessons, each in his own corner, and rule those under their charge quite as despotically as the master himself. Here the children are imprisoned from morning to night, and have not an hour to themselves, except on Friday and a half holiday at the New-moon.

"As far as study is concerned, the reading of Hebrew, at least, is pretty regularly learned. On the other hand, with the mastery of the Hebrew language very seldom is any progress made. Grammar is not treated in the school at all, but has to be learned, ex usu, by translation of the Scriptures. There is no dictionary of the Hebrew language. The children, therefore, begin at once with the explanation of the Bible. This is divided into as many sections as there are weeks in the year, in order that the Books of Moses may be read through in a year. Accordingly, every week some verses from the beginning of the section proper to the week are explained in school and that with every possible grammatical blunder. Nor can it well be otherwise. For, the Hebrew must be explained by means of the mother tongue. But the mother tongue of the Polish (as well as the majority of the German) Jews is itself full of defects and grammatical inaccuracies; and as a matter of course, therefore, also the Hebrew language must be of the same stamp. The pupil thus acquires just as little knowledge of the language as of the contents of the Bible."³⁶

"The study of the Talmud is carried on just as ~~is~~ ~~un~~regularly as that of the Bible. The language of the Talmud is learned only through frequent translation. This constitutes the first stage in the study of the Talmud. When the pupil has been directed for some time in translation by the teacher, he goes on to independent reading or explanation

of the Talmud. The teacher gives him a limited portion of the text which he must perform within a fixed time. The tenor and entire connection of the prescribed passage the pupil is required to bring out himself. The next stage is the use of the commentaries as a guide. The final stage in the study of the Talmud is that of disputation. It consists in eternally disputing about the book without end or aim. Subtlety, loquacity, and impertinence here carry the day. It is a kind of Talmudic skepticism and utterly incompatible with any systematic study directed to some end."³⁷

Elsewhere Solomon Maimon says, "As the children are doomed in the bloom of youth to such an infernal school, it may easily be imagined with what joy and rapture they looked forward to their release."³⁸

Allowing for exaggeration, such was the scene within the school. Still the same fanatic fervor obtained without. Study of the aforementioned type carried with it social prestige beyond our limited comprehension. Thus we are told by one who lived in those times;

"The study of the Talmud is the chief object of a learned education among our people. Riches, bodily advantages and talents of every kind have, indeed, in their eyes a certain worth and are esteemed in proportion; but nothing stands among them above the dignity of a good Talmudist. He has the first claim upon all offices and positions of honor in the community. If he enters an assembly, everyone rises before him. He is director of the conscience, lawgiver and

#37 Ibid. Page 45

#38 Ibid. Page 36

judge of the common man. A wealthy merchant, farmer or professional man who has a daughter, does everything in his power to get a good Talmudist for his son-in-law. As far as other matters are concerned, the scholar may be as deformed, diseased, and ignorant as possible; he will still have the advantage over others."³⁹

The Emperor's Suggestions For Reform

With conditions such as these dominating the educational scheme of the Jew, Joseph II, as an advocate of "Philosophic morality", interested himself particularly in the education of the Jewish youth, and incorporated the great education plank^{*40} into his "toleration" platform. Accordingly he ordered the establishment of Jewish elementary and high schools, and practically forced the adults also to acquire the language of the land, since henceforth only such documents were to be valid that were drawn up in that language. Hartwig Wessely was very enthusiastic over the laws issued by Emperor Joseph in favor of the Jews, and his visionary nature saw therein the promise of the dawn of a golden age for the Jewish people; and he wrote a psalm of praise in honor of the Emperor's imperial greatness and magnanimity. As soon as Hartwig learned that the ultra-orthodox Jews of Vienna were grief-stricken at the command to establish schools, as though it were doing violence to their religion, he addressed his famous open letter in Hebrew (March 1782),

#39 Ibid. Page 43

#40 Patent of Toleration", Article VIII, page 25 above

entitled "Words of Peace and Truth" ("Dibre Shalom ve-Emet") to the Austrian communities, to admonish them to welcome the imperial decree as a benefaction. In this letter he sets forth that it is the religious duty of the Jews, recommended by the Talmud itself, to acquire general education, and proposes a sort of curriculum by means of which the Jewish youth could be led from step to step from the elementary subjects to the study of the Talmud.

Emperor's Suggestions Accepted

Wessely points out that the Jews in their educational program failed to live up to the outline as set forth in Jewish lore, let alone their objecting to the introduction of ultra-reform and irreligious practices. He says, "If, as we contend we follow Jewish law, then wherefore do we so neglect the study of the Bible? For, is it not written in "Fathers" (in the Talmud): At (the age of) five (begins the study of) Bible, at ten ---- Mishna, at fifteen ---- Talmud? And who has permitted us to abrogate this law to the extent that we now admit our children to school at five or six years of age and immediately begin with a study of Talmud in a sophistic manner which is unintelligible and taxing of the young, undeveloped mind?"⁴¹

How true is this statement of the eighteenth century educator! His judgement seems to be vindicated by the child psychologists of today. Far from admitting that the intricate, involved thinking of Talmudic study is appropriate to six-year olds, modern psychologists claim quite the contrary

⁴¹ "Words of Peace and Truth", Hartwig Wessely, Page 59

to be true. "Children's thinking is inaccurate. There are several reasons why this must necessarily be so. In the first place their supply of facts is not adequate."⁴² The children of this immature age have not the factual background needed for a study of the profound and complex Talmud.

"In the second place, the material children do possess is apt to be inaccurate."⁴³ Since the Mishna and the Talmud are commentaries on the Bible, the children, not having the maturity to comprehend the laws and circumstances portrayed in the Bible, will, therefore, have inaccurate, confused ideas of the Talmud.

"In the third place, the character of the children's attention makes accurate thinking difficult."⁴⁴ Thinking on problems of the Talmud requires concentrated, sustained attention to ideals. Children's attention, as we have already noted, tends to lack in concentration and to be distracted easily; and these characteristics are the more marked when the attention is given not to perceptual objects, but to ideas, as in the study of the Talmud.

"In the fourth place, this last tendency involves more danger of inaccuracy from the fact of the lack of systematization of a child's mental life."⁴⁵ Talmudic study requires a concentrated chain of thought, highly correlative in nature. Such an organization comes only as a result of experience and of trained thinking; and both of these prerequisites children

#42 "Psychology of Childhood", Norsworthy and Whitley, Page 176

#43 "Ibid. Page 176

#44 "Ibid. Page 177

#45 "Ibid. Page 178

to be true. "Children's thinking is egocentric. There are several reasons why this must necessarily be so. In the first place their number of facts is not extensive." ⁴⁴ The

children of this generation are not the "natural philosophers" of the study of the sciences and natural history.

"In the second place, the scientific child is so

young in age as to be incapable." ⁴⁵ Since the child is so

young and inexperienced in the field, the child, too, has

the tendency to concentrate on the one and to ignore

everything in the field, all, however, have limitations.

Another idea of the child.

"In the third place, the knowledge of the child's

attention is not extensive." ⁴⁶ Thinking of

attention of the child is not concentrated, scattered atten-

tion is weak. Children's attention, as we have already

noted, tends to lack in concentration and to be directed

away; and these characteristics are the more marked when

the attention is given not to intellectual objects, but to those

as in the study of the child.

"In the fourth place, this last tendency involves

more danger of inaccuracy than the lack of the lack of atten-

tion of a child's mental life." ⁴⁷ Children's study requires

a concentrated mind at command, fully receptive to nature.

Now an attention given only as a result of experience and

at which children; subjects of these prearranged children

lack. Their mental life is in a chaotic condition, the connecting element between ideas being mere propinquity, or a superficial similarity ---- certainly not conducive to a study of Talmud.

"In the fifth place, the type of association characteristic of children is much like that of the lower animals ---- association of wholes."⁴⁶ The child's mind works coarsely in whole situations and, therefore, discrimination and analysis are difficult. Mental activity that is organized in such rudimentary, undifferentiated fashion can go but a little way toward solving a problem. And, problems are the background and backbone of the Talmud. Thus, as long as the coarser form of association predominates, Talmudic thinking must be equally crude; only when because of age, experience and training, the subtler and finer form of association becomes more pronounced can thinking in the Talmud^{ic} vein be carried on accurately. Wessely, apparently sensing this from his own experience, suggests, as we shall see, a revision in the educational program to give the young ones some additional experience and training in thinking ere they embark upon their Talmud voyage.

"In the sixth place, children lack a critical attitude, and hence often go astray in their thinking."⁴⁷ In most thinking the key to the problem depends upon the substitution of some aspect of the situation for the whole situation.

#46 Ibid. Page 179

#47 Ibid. Page 179

1. The first point is in a classic condition, the
connection between these being the possibility of
a hypothetical situation --- possibly not sensitive to a
change of values.

"In the first place, the type of association between
elements of a system is such that the first of the latter contains
--- association of values." The other elements are associated
in their positions and, therefore, distinguished and as-
pects are different. Mental activity that is associated in
some particular, modified or modified fashion can be a little
way towards solving a problem. And, therefore, the first
around and beyond of the first. Then, as long as the
system is of associated positions, the first is the first
and the second is the first; with some degree of the, experience
and the first, the second and third form of association is the
first and second form of association in the first, the first
first on a particular. The first, therefore, contains this first
its own experience, therefore, as it will see, a relation
is the first form of association in the first and second
first experience and the first in the first and second
and the first form.

"In the first place, the first form of association
is the first form of association in the first form." In
the first form, the first form of association is the first
form of association in the first form.

Relation of the first form of association to the first form.

To pick out the right element from among the many offered requires keen discrimination, an evaluation of the element from the standpoint of the problem; in short, it requires a critical weighing of the respective merits of all the possibilities offered. Children can hardly do this since they have not the attitude of criticism toward what is offered. Basically, it seems, Hartwig Wessely understood this, and offered a sounder educational outline all along the line.

Jewish Studies-First Five Years :

For the five-year-old who is to enter school, Wessely sets up as a prerequisite a correct reading knowledge of Hebrew, with proper pronunciation and enunciation. Thereupon, the child is to enter the school. But, he himself can better state his case, "In the first place, after the child has learned to read the Hebrew language and to pronounce it correctly, when he is five years old, he should be brought to school to study Bible. Do not, however, permit the teachers to translate the passages, each according to his will and style, but there should be a simple, standard text of the Bible with a lucid, acceptable translation in the language of the land, such as that of Moses Mendelssohn. Using this text, the teacher should first explain the meaning of each individual word, translating each exactly into the language of the land. When the meaning of the words has been fully comprehended, then and only then, should an attempt be made to crystallize the thought of the passage. Thus will a thorough knowledge of the land's language be acquired in addition to a mastery of the Bible."⁴⁸

#48. "Words of Peace and Truth," Hartwig Wessely, Page 65.

The educator allows a complete year to be spent on laying the basis or foundation. And, as we gather from later discussion, this undoubtedly means one year of daily instruction of approximately four to five hours in duration. Then "when the pupil will have completed one year of such study, the teacher will begin to teach him formal grammar. Let him, however, beware of instruction that is too complex and complicated. Rather shall he teach the comparatively simple, broad, underlying principles, without frills and decorations. So, after several months of such application, let the teacher apply the rules of grammar to a parsing of words of the Bible; so that after a year and a half of such devoted study, the average, normal child will acquire a facility of the Hebrew language, whereby he will be able to read and translate unaided from the Prophets and Hagiographa in a clear and natural style. Nor shall he forsake his study of the Bible thereafter; but let him continue his study thereof in this much-improved manner."⁴⁹

Wessely, it seems, was throughout an advocate of simplicity of language and directness of presentation. This characteristic appears to permeate his whole thinking. For, he emphasizes the same earlier, in his German commentary to the book of Leviticus which he prepared at the invitation of Mendelssohn. In the introduction of his commentary, Wessely says, "And in this commentary I have used as my chief sources four commentators most renowned for their simplicity and directness of presentation; Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi),
#49. Ibid. Page 66

Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam), Abraham ibn Ezra, and Moses ben Nachman (Ramban). In the commentary of this book of laws I have abridged and abbreviated as much as possible, eliminating all needless disputation between authorities, including only what was needed to a clear understanding of the meaning. And the minimum that I wrote is likewise as brief as possible, brevity and clarity being my aims throughout, with no sacrifice of the contents. I have not referred to other eminent commentators, whose works are valuable additions to a study of the Bible, since they go into lengthy, prolonged discussions, and split hairs where hairs need not be split."⁵⁰

By this time, after two or so years of such study, the youngster is fairly well acquainted with Biblical approach and technique, and is prepared for something a bit more complex. Thus, "when the child is seven or seven and one-half years of age, the teacher should impart to the pupil the rules and laws of the Torah (Bible) for which special textbooks ought be written, using the "question-and-answer technique." Thus, for instance: Teacher:-What are the holidays upon which work is forbidden? Pupil:- First and foremost among these holidays is the Sabbath. Teacher:-And what is the Sabbath? Pupil:- Six days did the Lord work, and on the seventh He rested... etc. ... In this manner, by a text simply arranged yet comprehensive and interesting, can the good teacher instruct the pupil in all the laws in a period varying from six months to a year. Thus, if the pupil later makes but little progress in the Mishna or Talmud, he will not leave school empty-headed,

#50. "Introduction to Commentary on book of Leviticus,"
Hartwig Wessely

but with a store of laws drawn from the Bible. The text should also have a literal, simple, and exact translation in the language of the land."⁵¹

Such training for about three years, as has been already described, gives to the child a collection of experience which he had never before been wont to receive. He experiences the thought process from its simplest forms to its most complex. By the time three years have elapsed, he is prepared for his initial dive into the sea of the Talmud, this time able to swim therein.

"And when he shall become versed in these (Bible laws), at the age of seven or eight years, depending on the child and his zeal, then, after sufficient examination to prove his worthiness, he should be brought to the class where Mishna and Talmud are taught. Nevertheless, he should not forsake his Bible study, but daily should devote an hour or so, in addition to the several hours of studying the Mishna and Talmud. For, it is sufficient, if in both classes combined, he spend from four to five hours; since it is essential and vital that he be not so burdened that he study from compulsion, and not of his own volition. If his load is not made too heavy, then he will go at his work with joy and love, which is contrary to what we now find: The teacher now teaches subjects too mature for the child's mental capacity, in an unintelligible language, using force and threats, and arousing only opposition to and contempt for the study of Jewish lore. Consequently, it is important

#51. "Words of Peace and Truth," Hartwig Wessely, Page 67.

to begin this study of Mishna and Talmud on a gradual, digestible level; for it is of greater import that the child digest a small quantity of simple food for the brain, rather than suffer indigestion from excessive quantities of rich foods. In the beginning, let not the master keep his eyes glued on prescribed quantity, but instead let him attempt to habituate the young one in the style, manner of presentation, trend of reasoning, methods of Biblical exposition, and general system of Talmudic study. After the child has mastered the method, vocabulary, and sentiment of this study, he will then be able to make rapid progress on his own initiative."⁵²

Secular Studies:-First five years.

Up to this point Wessely has discussed only the Jewish studies in formulating his program of education. True, he has breathed a new scientific spirit upon that which was most ruthlessly and unscientifically being forced down the throats of unwilling and innocent children, whose lives were being wasted in useless study. How much these young souls suffered must for the most part be left to our imagination. Yet occasionally we find records of those who went through this mental hell, such as the following, "The pen falls from my hand when I remember that I and others like me were obliged to spend in this soul-killing business the best days of our life, to sit up many a night to try and bring out some sense where there was none, to exercise our wits in the discovery of contradictions where none was to be found."⁵³ Or as we read in

#52. Ibid. Page 68.

#53. "An Autobiography," Solomon Maimon. Page 121

another place, "I burned with a desire to acquire more knowledge, but how was this to be accomplished in the want of Guidance, of scientific books, and of other means for the purpose? How was I to begin? To learn Latin with a Catholic teacher was for me impossible, on the one hand, because the prejudices of my own people prohibited to me all languages but Hebrew, and all sciences but the Talmud and the vast array of its commentators; on the other hand, because the prejudices of Catholics would not allow them to give instruction in those matters to a Jew."⁵⁴

For such and other reasons Wessely was interested in expanding his curriculum to include secular subjects as well as those only Jewish in nature. But he did not sacrifice his religious tone for the secular, for he still clung to the tradition of Israel despite the claims of his critics. He writes, "I have already stated that it is sufficient if the child (eight years old) studies Bible two hours daily and Talmud two hours daily. Thereafter he should get some time off for recreation and rest. Then, he should spend approximately two hours in the study of matters that will clarify much that is in the Torah. That will materially aid in providing his livelihood in later years, that will prepare him to be an enlightened social being who will mix with grace and propriety with his fellow beings. One-half hour should be set aside for the purpose of learning to read and write the language of the land correctly. Another half-hour should be dedicated to a study of the map. The teacher should lay before the

another place, "I believe with a desire to acquire more
knowledge, but how was this to be accomplished in the want
of resources, of political power, and of other means for
the purpose? How was I to begin? To learn Latin with a
Catholic teacher was for me impossible, for one hand,
because the probability of my own people's prohibition to me
all languages but Latin, and all sciences but the Latin
and the rest of its system; and on the other hand,
because the assistance of Catholics would not allow them to
give instruction in those matters to a Jew.²⁴

For such and other reasons I was not
in expanding the curriculum to include necessary subjects as
well as those only taught in nature. And so did not
acquire the religious sense for the teacher, for a will
aimed to the tradition of Israel despite the wishes of his
pupils. He writes, "I have already stated that it is
unfortunate if the child (14th year old) studies Latin
two hours daily and learns two hours daily. Therefore he
should not have all his time for recreation and rest. Then
his school should approximately two hours in the study of
nature that will clarify what that is in the future. That
will naturally aid in providing his livelihood in later
years, and will prepare him to be an enlightened citizen
before who will with great and industry with the future
future. But still more should he not waste for the purpose
of learning to read and write the language of the Jews
unnecessarily. Another well-known should be devoted to a
study of the law. The teacher should first before the

child a map, point out land and seas, compass directions, relative positions of countries, etc. The child should not learn his geography from books, but from maps and the words of the teacher. Being in the imaginative period, the child will readily grasp that which is told him and will retain it, reinforced by the fruit of his imagination. In this way the child will develop the habit of consulting the map in his later years, so that incidents will then have spacial relationship to him and be far more significant, therefore. Then there should be devoted a half-hour for perusing the books recording the travels of divers travelers in their journeys here and there. These will add much to the store of vicarious experience and rectify the lack of experience characterizing the child, alluded to above. If we have them read in these fields an hour or so daily for two years, they will encompass the whole gamut of secular knowledge, since the people of other nations have already written desirable textbooks in these subjects; this being another reason why it is essential that the pupils master the language of the land."⁵⁵

In this fashion Wessely has a dual system of education formally at work from the very beginning of the child's instruction. At first stress is laid on having the child master the language of the land; having mastered this, emphasis is then placed on certain elementary secular subjects, besides the traditional, but now seientifically-arranged Jewish subjects.

Program For The Adolescent

When the children reach the age of ten or eleven, Wessely makes provision for individual differences and aptitudes. For those who are average he advises a continuation of the same curriculum as he suggested previously. In addition he considers those who make rapid progress. It seems advisable to select those children ten or eleven years of age, who are quick to comprehend and have a retentive memory, who succeed in their Talmudic study, and in their leisure hours submit them to sample lessons and to (diagnostic) tests, such as in the elements of Euclid and the principles of arithmetic. If they show aptitude to these new secular studies, then add them to their regular curriculum for an hour daily, surely not at a sacrifice of the Talmudic study, but as an addition thereto. From this time on, these pupils, provided they have mastered the language of the land, will without help from the teacher, be able to stride forward rapidly and learn more and more secular material from the books which have already been composed by the scholars of the world, in simple, clear, and concise language."⁵⁶

Wessely On Secular Subjects

In his book, Hartwig Wessely lists what he chooses to term a "partial list" of secular subjects, which he recommends for study. Among those he enumerates are anatomy, arithmetic, astronomy, biology, botany, human geography, physical geography, geometry, history, hydraulics, mechanics, medicine, optics, and zoology. It is granted that this is

When the children reach the age of ten or eleven, we must make provision for individual differences and interests. For those who are average we suggest a combination of the two systems as we suggested previously. In addition we consider those who make rapid progress. It is advisable to select those children who are eleven years of age, who are given to conversation and have a tendency to curiosity. We suggest in their scientific study, and in their leisure hours, to select those to study insects and the habits of birds, such as in the elements of biology and the principles of anatomy. If they show aptitude in these new scientific studies, then add them to their regular curriculum for a year or two, surely not at a sacrifice of the scientific study, but as an additional interest. From this time on, those pupils, provided they have mastered the lessons of the year, will without help from the teacher, be able to obtain for themselves and learn more and more and after material from the books which have already been covered by the students of the year, in science, history, and language.

Science as a General Subject

In his book, Huxley recently lists what he regards as being a "partial list" of natural subjects, which he recommends for study. Among these he enumerates the history, astronomy, geology, biology, botany, human anatomy, physical geography, geology, history, chemistry, medicine, and zoology. It is pointed out that this is

an imposing array of subjects for an average person to master. But Wessely, educator that he was, never dreamt any person should master them all. He believed everyone should have a familiarity with the basic principles of these various sciences, while he should master but one. When, for instance, he discusses the subject of geometry, he says, "Those who specialize in it (geometry) can well spend years in its complete mastery. But this is not necessary for the average layman, especially for him who dedicates himself to a study of the Torah. But there are many in our midst, learned in Jewish lore, who know not even of the existence of such a science, and who are completely at sea when anyone casually mentions it in conversation. For these people a study of the principles of geometry is recommended such as can be gathered from one hour or so of study daily for a week. This will prevent the occurrence of embarrassing situations, such as that which confronted the Jew, who, when he was told the height of an inaccessible mountain peak, asked, "How can I believe you when no person has ever reached the top?"⁵⁷

Wessely says the same about the sciences of astronomy, hydraulics, mechanics and optics, as examples of secular subjects. For all these, he suggests that they be assimilated in spare time, as recreation, from books that have been written in a comprehensive, but simple style. "It is easy to complete a survey of all these (secular) subjects that I have named by surveying the literature found thereon, studying but an hour daily for a period of two or so years. It is a well-

an interesting array of subjects for an average person to
master. But possibly, however, that he was, never through
any person might expect him to. He believed everyone
should have a familiarity with the basic principles of these
various sciences, with the school master but not, when, the
instance, he discusses the subject of geography, he says,
"Those who specialize in it (geography) can well spend years
in its complete mastery. But this is not necessary for the
average person, especially for the ordinary citizen."
to a study of the world. But there are many in our midst,
labeled in their lives, who know not even of the existence
of such a science, and who are completely at sea when they
are casually mentioned it in conversation. For these people
a study of the principles of geography is recommended such
as can be gathered from one hour or so of study daily for a
week. This will prevent the occurrence of embarrassing
situations, such as that which confronted the Jew, who, when
he was told the height of an inaccessible mountain peak,
asked, "How can I believe you when no person has ever reached
the top?"

Needless to say the same about the subjects of astronomy,
biology, and physics, as examples of sciences that
for all times, he suggests that they be assimilated
in spare time, as pastimes, these books that have been written
in a non-technical, but simple style. "It is easy to master
a survey of all these (sciences) subjects that I have named
by following the instructions found therein, studying but an
hour daily for a period of two or three years. It is a well-

known fact that the child has many free hours in his period of adolescence. When he comes home from school, let him instead of running about the streets aimlessly, all the time, getting into unnecessary trouble, let him accustom himself to sit down and for recreative purposes read things of this nature, which surely will appeal to his adventuresome and imaginative spirit. They will not only benefit him in general, but will prove indispensable aids to his study of the Bible and the Talmud."⁵⁸

First in Wessely's listing of secular subjects, but last in this presentation because of their importance, are geography and history. In speaking of the study of geography, Hartwig Wessely does not stress rote memorization of unnecessary lists of cities, capitals, rivers, etc. Instead, he lays his emphasis on an intelligent understanding of the factors lying behind what we call geography. "In geography we should make much use of the map, so as to sense realities. We ought to comprehend land and water surfaces, relative positions and distances, boundaries and topography of countries, so as to understand better the reactions of the inhabitants therein, their trade and means of livelihood, their customs and manners, their plant and animal life - facts which are essential to carrying on intelligent and sane international commerce and trade, as well as to a clearer conception of many Biblical and Talmudic allusions and references."⁵⁹

Particularly progressive and contributory to educational advance is Wessely's analysis of the study

#58. Ibid. Page 329

#59. Ibid. Page 319.

of history in this new curriculum. Hearken to his words and see if they do not savor of twentieth century educational philosophy! "I do not say that a person should read all the history books of every country, nor should he study all the battles and military campaigns, nor should he learn lists of kings and military leaders, and the like. This is only for idlers, who would but pass away their time to no avail. Such intensive study is needed only by the handful of scholars who earn their bread by such investigations, and by teachers who impart their knowledge to others. But the knowledge of history about which we speak here obtains only in knowing the highlights of history, as it were. We should be cognizant of the outstanding movements in history. It is only proper that we elaborate upon these major movements with some of the great events in historical development. The comprehension of these movements will make meaningful many of the Biblical, historical allusions which would otherwise be meaningless and insignificant. If one learns carefully the movements of past history, he may, if he is wise, foretell future trends, in the sense that the great movements tend to repeat themselves. Is this not the sanest justification and most invaluable contribution history can make as a subject of our curriculum?"⁶⁰

Psychological and Administrative Considerations:

Wessely went further, beyond merely setting down a curriculum of subject matter. He realized that system and

order must prevail if this suggested program was to survive. He decided that it was necessary to introduce a formal system of testing with definite standards of achievement, which was an unheard of procedure in the past. "And so, we should provide for the division of boys into classes and grades; so that a child studying reading and grammar shall not pass into the section learning Bible and morals until the heads (of the school) will test him and pass upon his qualifications for promotion or retention. The same should be done in passing from any group to the next one higher."⁶¹

Moreover, Wessely recognized a condition of fact: not all boys are adapted to Talmud study. For them, after due examination, he recommends a change in curriculum. "And if the heads find that the child is not suited for the study of Talmud, it is best that he discontinue such study and begin to study an art or craft which appeals to him, while he continues to study Bible and morals. In this manner everyone will be completely adjusted to that for which he is best suited; for we were not all born to be Talmud students. The Lord has made differences among His beings and has given each his own powers; let each develop along his own lines. Since by forcing them into unnatural followings, be they study or crafts, we not only reduce the efficiency in the line chosen, but also take away from the endowed qualities their potential force."⁶²

Thus Hartwig Wessely makes his eloquent plea for the recognition of individual differences, which he repeats many times. Another educational innovation pleaded

#61. Ibid. Page 34

#62. Ibid. Page 34

by Wessely is that of specialization. He was not one of those who believed a person should know everything about many things. In one passage he states, "Everyone in the country should study one of the major branches of science or crafts which attracts him to it, but he ought not study them all intensively."⁶³ For, "he who wishes to know the dimensions of his field should go to the surveyor, he whose scales are impaired should repair himself to the mechanic, he who needs medicine should go to the doctor."⁶⁴ While Wessely believed people should know a little about many things, he likewise held one must know nearly everything about some one thing in particular. As stated above, Wessely enthusiastically introduced into Jewish education the idea of diagnostic testing. He recognized that by sampling a subject, by making a preliminary survey, much valuable time might be saved. If the child showed aptitude in the exploratory course, he probably would benefit from the course as a whole. And vice versa, if he failed miserably, under ordinary circumstances it would but be a waste of his time to pursue a study so difficult for him."In every country there should be specialists, some agriculturists, some craftsmen, some artisans, some soldiers, some tradesmen, some officers and judges, and governmental advisers. And if some layman has a problem involving any of the specialized fields, let him turn to the specialist in that line of endeavor for information or advice."⁶⁵

Wessely also took into account the plasticity of youth, the fact that the habit-forming period was early in the child's life. Hence he objected to those who said that

#63. Ibid. Page 52

#64. Ibid. Page 54-275.

#65. Ibid.

if the child were taught solely religious themes in his youth, the secular would automatically follow later. In answer to this assumption of other educators, Wessely says, "Educate and train the child while he is still young, before he is filled with a host of inconsequential nonentities of the time, while his mind is as receptive to the educative process as clean, smooth paper to the application of ink. Likewise educate him (the child) according to his ability, for not all are created alike."⁶⁶

Textbooks and Teachers.

Hartwig Wessely was, however, so far-sighted an educator, that he was fully aware that a reorganized curriculum, scientifically founded and having progressive educational policies would be incapable of bringing about the changes he sought. He knew that some other vital factors to be considered were the textbooks and the teachers. In both, Wessely makes two demands: first a presentation in the language of the land; and second, a presentation in simple, clear, concise language within the grasp of the child. "Therefore, it is necessary that new books be composed in the language of the land, in a simple, clear and straightforward manner, and that the author draw up his book according to the mental capacity of the child."⁶⁷ Wessely was, likewise, disgusted with the prevailing type of teacher who spoke broken, ungrammatical German, and, as a last word, urged, "It is essential that we choose teachers and instructors, of intelligence and of high moral and religious standards, men who are expert in Hebrew and its grammar, as well as

#66. Ibid. Page 3

#67. Ibid. Page 21

German and its grammar, so as to raise a generation that will not be tongue-tied in the language of the land."⁶⁸

#68. Ibid. Page 32.

Chapter IV

THE REACTIONS OF THE JEWS TO THE "DIBRE SHALOM ve-EMET"

Its Proponents And Opponents

Little did Hartwig realize the storm that was to follow his publication of "Words of Peace and Truth". Little did he realize that he would become the target for poisoned darts as well as perfumed bouquets. Appreciative recognition was his reward from the Jews of Trieste, most of whom were of Italian and Portuguese descent and not the least inclined to consider secular study as heresy and a negation of Judaism. They welcomed this educational treatise and immediately went to request Count Zinzendorf, the governor of the province that he open such schools for them, also to inquire where they could obtain textbooks for religious and moral instruction in the schools to be established in accordance with the order of Emperor Joseph. Zinzendorf referred them to Mendelssohn, who, as we narrated in the first chapter, called attention to his friend Wessely and his open letter ("Words of Peace and Truth"); whereupon the community of Trieste entered into enthusiastic correspondence with Wessely.

On the other hand, Wessely's program of education aroused a storm of indignation against him on the part of the orthodox zealots. On general principles, they were greatly exasperated at his enthusiasm for the Emperor's suggested reforms. Specifically, he (Wessely) had committed an error in tact and diplomacy when seemingly innocently he uttered the

words which shortly resounded throughout the entire rabbinic world as proof of his heresy. In his open letter when he had sought sanction from the Talmud for his contention that secular or general knowledge is ordained in the Talmud, he had very unfortunately quoted from the Talmud, "A Talmudist who does not possess (general) knowledge is more hideous than ~~an~~ ass."⁶⁹ This application of the Talmudic phrase aroused the ire of the ultra-Talmudists to an unforeseen frenzy. At the head of the rabbis who came forth against Wessely was Rabbi Ezekiel Landau, who then held office in Prague. From pulpit and in writing he tore to pieces the constructive efforts of Wessely. He sent letters to the rabbis throughout Germany and Poland, asking that Wessely's works be burned and the author be excommunicated for his heresy in casting derogatory remarks upon the spiritual heads of Israel. Indeed, two rabbis, Solomon Beruschi and David Tevele, under the influence of Rabbi Landau, actually ordered the books of Wessely to be burned on the pyre and their author excommunicated. The majority of the rabbis of Germany, however, though they were incensed by the attack upon their honor, dared not take steps openly against Wessely, since he had written in support of the emperor. Rabbi Hirschel, the chief rabbi of Berlin, also threatened to take measures against Wessely; however, in the city where the Mendelssohnian spirit held sway, even an accusation of heresy against Wessely was not very effective.

#69 Ibid. Page 6

Wessely's Search For Academic Truth

Since he was attacked bitterly, we ought to pause here long enough to hear the testimony Wessely bears in his writings as to his intentions. Consciously he never harbored the slightest suggestion of undermining the fundamentals of Judaism. His was a constant search for scientific truth. All he asked for was academic freedom to seek and preach academic truth. Truth was his first and last objective. In his writing we find evidences of this. "When I came to comment upon this difficult book (Leviticus) many times there entered into my mind commentaries differing from those of my predecessors. I knew not what to do. I thought: Shall I include my own commentary or omit it? If I speak, it may be insignificant, and if I remain silent, my conscience will prick me; for truth springs eternal even from the most humble places. Therefore I have at times dared set forth my own interpretations, for I thought: The Lord knows the working of all hearts, and before Him it is clear that I seek nothing but the truth."⁷⁰

Traditional Substantiation Of His Suggested Program

With sore heart and pained soul Wessely silently, at first heard the curses and anathemas flying about. But there is a limit, however, to human endurance. The time came when he could no longer bear the jibes and he published a second letter in reply to his accusers, and in justification and elaboration of his educational doctrines. How he felt may be judged

#70 Introduction to Wessely's Commentary on the Book of Leviticus

from his comments. "I have heard the slander and curses of these rabbis, as though I had burned the Torah in a spirit of heresy. They deal not with me justly, they speak no logic in their complaints, they show me not the proper way (from their point of view), they permit me no opportunity to plead my case, but secretly and poisonously they spread malicious gossip about me in every community. I stand bewildered at the attack and comprehend it not. I read and reread my first letter a thousand times searching for heresy, and found it not. I have never suggested sacrificing Talmudic studies for secular; rather one should supplement the other."⁷¹ Still when the rabbinic assault continued relentlessly the ever-unfortunate Wessely was moved to say in his third letter (again a defense and edification of his doctrines): "From the beginning and to this day I have suffered much. Keen-pointed arrows have been lodged in me, and burning coals have seared my soul. Never did I dream that this would be my lot. From the first have I vowed to be put to shame, but not to shame others. My only consolation is that I know that my foes are honorable men and fear God. They honestly believe their cause is just. My hope, therefore, lies in God; perhaps He will show these men wherein they err."⁷²

As indicated, however, Wessely did not devote his later letters exclusively to self-vindication. On the contrary, he attempted to demonstrate the necessity for secular study. In the first place, he falls back upon Moses Maimonides as an authority for justifying secular study.

#71 "Words of Peace and Truth," Hartwig Wessely, Page 46
 #72 Ibid. Page 123

"To those who would charge me with an infraction of Jewish tradition when I broach the topic of secular study, thus will I make reply. Would that you in your piety attained half the righteousness of our saintly Maimonides, may he rest in peace, and he in his codification of law wrote thus: 'And the basis of this computation is the science of numbers and geometry, in which the scholars of Greece have composed many works, which to this day are consulted by men of knowledge. The books of science composed by the scholars of Israel have unfortunately been misplaced and lost. Nevertheless, these Greek books deal with scientific data which has of yore been corroborated and proven. Thus to us it matters not whether the authors of these books were Jewish or heathen; provided that the contents of their efforts have been verified and shown to be true, the identity of the compilers is not at all material.' So it is in our day."⁷³

Then Wessely continues to prove the necessity of the study of the secular subjects and the language of the land, against which suggestion his opponents had laid a barrage of abuse. "With the lack of an exact, fine and correct knowledge of German, a translation of the Bible is attempted in vain. For the teacher finds himself unable to give expression to his thoughts and the child, therefore gets not the correct impression. Moreover, the child will never master the art of thinking, for words are the vehicle of thought. Defective in one, he will automatically be

deficient in the other. Secondly, most Talmud students of today do not devote themselves exclusively to study, but find themselves required to spend part of their time in gainful employment. Therefore, is it not logical that, while in school the children should receive instruction in some crafts or arts, such as medicine and mechanics, so that they will be better prepared for their future work? And since much of their future employment will be in commerce and trade, where intercourse with non-Jewish elements is demanded, is it not clear, then, that a correct use of the language of the land will prove an asset to our people? Particularly is this so now, when all documents to be legal and acceptable must, according to the Toleranzpatent,^{*74} henceforth be written in the language of the land. Thirdly, as victims of our circumstances, we are scattered throughout the world in many lands, and our position is low and troubled. Is there, therefore, need for humbling ourselves further? For it is true that when a group of people speak the language of the land poorly or with improper pronunciation, if they speak it at all, they heap shame and ridicule on their whole group. The other elements look down upon this 'mute' group as foreign and inferior. By learning the language we may elevate our position with ease. Fourthly, by not being familiar with the current tongue, people are deprived of access to valuable ^{stores} stores of information. Innumerable and invaluable are the writings which store in them vicariously past experiences and stories of human progress. To us who know not these words, the stores are forever sealed. We can easily remove from our eyes these shades of darkness, learn the language, educate and enrich ourselves by the experience of others.

#74 Patent of Toleration, Joseph II, Article XV page 24 above

#75 "Words of Peace and Truth," Hartwig Wessely, page 81

Later, Wessely, wishing to soothe the hurts of his people and unwilling to leave them with harsh words, explains their lack of secular knowledge by reminiscing historically: "Our brethren here in Germany have suffered greatly these many years. The natives of the land hated us, and heaped upon us penalties and punishments conceivable only by man. We have suffered spiritual torture, social degradation, and economic limitations. And as our economic opportunities decreased, our financial status fell, and with it our moral and spiritual standards. No longer did we have noble manners, no longer did culture spring up in our midst. Gradually, however, our limitations have been lessened, opportunity now presents itself for our rising up and breaking some of the shackles of social degradation, if we will but adopt some of the ways of the land wherein we live."⁷⁶

Reason did little to assuage the angry orthodox rabbinate. For outside of Austria and Berlin where the hand of the government was dreaded, fearful attacks persisted against Hartwig Wessely. All the while Wessely wept inwardly as he gazed about and saw his books burned and desecrated, without any of the enlightened scholars coming to his aid. All who had been so glib of tongue in scholastic disputation now ~~formed~~ ^{found} themselves wordless and hid from the thick of the battle.

Final Appeal To The Jews Of Italy

As a last resort Wessely wrote the following letter to the leaders of the community of Trieste, seeking substantiation for his educational program: "Please do justice with the people of Israel and with me. Ask your honorable Chief-Rabbi of Trieste, Rabbi Isaac Formigini, to judge this matter

Likewise try to have the rabbis of your land vindicate my opinions, after weighing them on the scales of judgement."⁷⁷

Indeed, Rabbi Elijah Morpurgo fought valiantly and with success in behalf of Wessely. Largely through his efforts the Italian rabbis came to agree with Wessely on the heart of the problem (though they differed on some minor details and some questioned his tact): namely, that it was advisable to include secular subjects in the curriculum of the Jewish schools. Many Italian rabbis issued official proclamations vindicating Wessely, three of which are now presented. First, to be considered, is the Moses Furnigini decree of the Chief-Rabbi of Trieste, who wrote: "I have been asked to pass judgement on a curriculum for the children of Israel. I have seen the God-inspired work of the two illustrious educators: namely, Moses Mendelssohn of Dessau and Hartwig Wessely of Berlin. Whatsoever they preached and suggested has been well done. In the "Words of Peace and Truth," they have counselled with God, and have shown us the path which brings glory to Him and salvation to mankind. Let us fasten our eyes upon their words, and heap praise upon them, for they are highly acceptable."⁷⁸ Next in review is a decree of Samuel Jedidiah Norzi, Rabbi of Ferrara: "Would that the leaders of Israel would heed the command (of Joseph II and Hartwig Wessely) to teach the children secular subjects; for then and only then, will the Bible be properly understood."⁷⁹ Third and last for analysis is the decree of the "Three Princes of Israel",

#77 "Sources of Jewish Education," Sincha — Asaph, page 213

#78 Ibid. Page 214

#79 Ibid. Page 215

Simcha Kalimani, Abraham Karkubi, Abraham Pacifico, heads of the Rabbinic College of Venice: "There has been brought to our attention the letter of Hartwig Wessely, "Words of Peace and Truth", and as its name, so it is. In it Wessely demonstrates the obligation and necessity we bear to heed the command of the great Emperor, who has seen our humble position among the peoples, and has accordingly ordained that the Jewish leaders of every province establish schools wherein the children will learn not only the Holy Scriptures, but secular subjects and the language of the land as well. Some Rabbis have vociferously attacked Wessely for his writing, claiming he is motivated by heresy. We have read three times the "Words of Peace and Truth", seeking heresy; and finally, with God's aid we feel there is nothing for us to do but vindicate the book and its author."⁸⁰

With these rabbis in Italy coming to his aid Wessely eventually proved the educational victor. While his position in Berlin was clarified and strengthened through the intercession of Daniel Itzig, the president of the Berlin Jewish Community, Wessely also saw here and there, even in Prague, the stronghold of the bitter Rabbi Landau, that there arose schools for regular (secular) instruction. Naturally the heart of Wessely was filled with joy at this turn of affairs, while the orthodox opposition was downcast and dismayed.

Ultimate Evaluation of Wessely's Educational Efforts

But time, which is the final judge of man's activities, proved that after all the ultra-Talmudists were not altogether wrong. Their fears and hesitancy were not in vain.

For Mendelssohn and Wessely, who felt so perfectly at home in the ancient, solid edifice of Judaism, and who in their efforts at modernization desired only to remove its cobwebs, here and there, themselves contributed to the gradual crumbling of its foundation. Wessely to his sorrow still lived to witness this ruin with tear-filled eyes. For, it was inevitable that the regeneration of the Jewish people that resulted from Mendelssohn's and Wessely's activities would bring about a disintegration in the forms of religious life WITHIN Jewry. When this process of dissolution set in before many days had passed, the Bible was laid to rest in forsaken corners and the holy Hebrew language was completely in disuse by the Jewish people; indeed, in their rush to adopt "modern" and "liberal" ideas, the school administrators heeded not in the least the balanced educational advice of Hartwig Wessely, as set forth in his "Words of Peace and Truth."

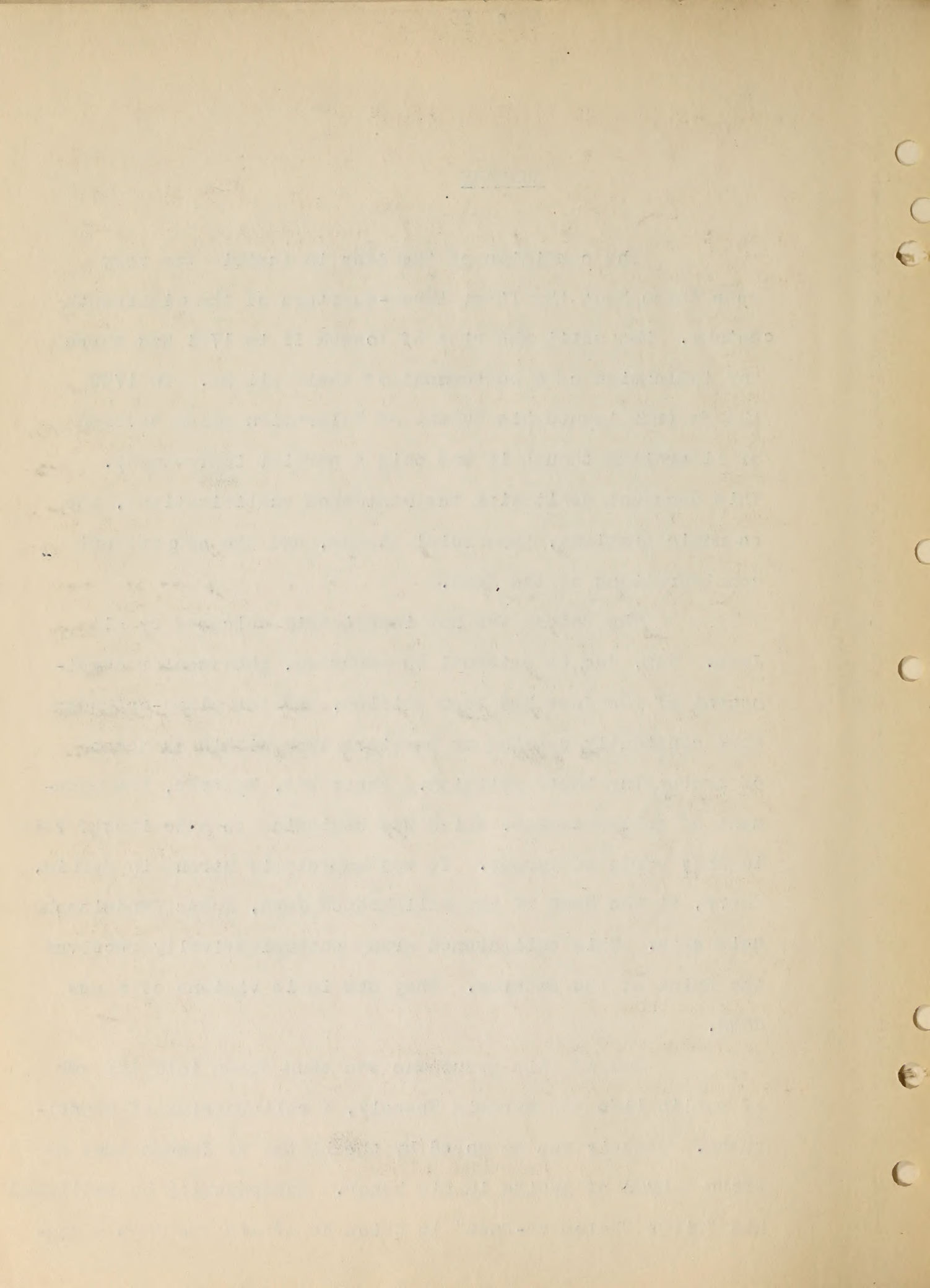
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SUMMARY

The condition of the Jews in Austria was very poor throughout the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century. Not until the rise of Joseph II in 1781 was there any indication of a betterment of their plight. In 1782 the Emperor issued his Patent of Toleration which savored of liberalism though it was only a partial improvement. This document dealt with the residence qualifications, the economic problems, the social status, and the educational considerations of the Jews.

The Patent was not immediately welcomed by all Jews. For, due to external suppression, the secular development of the Jews had been stifled, and the ultra-orthodox were constantly setting up barriers from within as means of protecting their religion. There was, however, the movement of enlightenment, which was beginning to make itself felt in many parts of Europe. It was especially strong in Berlin, where, at the head of the enlightened Jews, Moses Mendelssohn held sway. This enlightened group enthusiastically received the Edict of the Emperor. They saw in it visions of a new dawn.

One of this group who was thus drawn into the web of public life was Hartwig Wessely, a collaborator of Mendelssohn. Wessely was so moved by the edict of Joseph that he wrote a hymn of praise in his honor. Subsequently he published his "Dibre Shalom ve-Emet" in which he offers the Jews a sug-



gested, new curriculum of education.

Hitherto, Jewish education had consisted exclusively of an unsystematized presentation of Jewish law and lore, as represented in the Bible and Talmud. In "Dibre Shalom ve-Emet", Wessely outlines a more scientific program of study. His curriculum, in the first place, includes secular as well as Jewish studies. In each branch of study (secular and religious) Wessely provides for system and order, procedure from simple fundamentals to more and more complex situations, testing for promotion, and the like. He recognizes the problems caused by individual differences, problems that become especially bothersome in the adolescent. He, thus becomes one of the few Jewish educators to state openly that not all the Jewish students are suited for Talmudic study, but rather they should get vocational preparation in their student days. So, basing his curriculum on what are now conceded to be sound psychological principles and educational philosophy, Wessely promulgated his theories in 1782.

They were met with mingled feelings. The enlightened acclaimed Wessely as a broad-visioned educator, while the ghettoized orthodoxy condemned him and his principles mercilessly. After bitter debates and agonizing disillusionment, Wessely was finally vindicated educationally, only to see a disintegration of Judaism in Germany result from a misuse of his well-intentioned suggestions.

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